

**Prepared Remarks of Julius Genachowski
Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
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“Auschwitz: Remembrance and Responsibility”

**Commemoration of the 65th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz
Oswiecim, Poland
January 27, 2010**

Thank you to the government and people of Poland for hosting this important event, and to the International Auschwitz Council and the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

I'm grateful to President Obama for asking me to lead the delegation representing the United States on the occasion of the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. I'm privileged to be part of such a distinguished delegation, along with Assistant to the President Susan Sher, Ambassador Lee Feinstein, Special Envoy Hanna Rosenthal, and three extraordinary survivors of the Holocaust, each with powerful experiences and deeply noble lives: Mr. Roman Kent, Ms. Charlene Schiff, and Ms. Eda Sternberg-Powidzki.

I also welcome colleagues from the United States Department of Education, here to participate in the Education Ministers' Conference on "Auschwitz: Memory, Responsibility, Education" -- Matthew Yale, who is the department's Deputy Chief of Staff, and Phil Rosenfelt, who is Deputy General Counsel and the Secretary of Education's designated representative to the council for the Holocaust Museum.

As head of this delegation to Auschwitz, I was sent to mourn, to remember, to testify -- for I have a connection with this part of Europe, and with the solemn grounds on which we stand today. Genachowski is a name pronounced easily in this part of the world. My family has roots in Poland, Ukraine, Hungary, Romania, and other nearby countries.

Roots like Bella Rabinovitch and her family, a Jewish family.

Bella was a mother of four -- three grown girls and a boy -- living in Belgium in the first half of the last century. Her husband, Chaim Ben Zion, was the Cantor in Antwerp's main synagogue. His gift was his voice, which he used to lead the congregation in prayer and to sing his beloved operas. Bella's children were married; young grandchildren were part of the family mix. A nice life for a girl originally from a poor rural village in the Ukraine.

But as the German invasion of Europe spread into Belgium, Bella's world began to crumble. One daughter and son-in-law fled the country, fearing the worst. Then Bella's husband and son were arrested and sent to a slave labor camp. Another son-in-law, Shimon, was picked up by the SS on a streetcar (his identity card checked; it was marked "J"). He brazenly escaped, and that night left the country with his wife, Bella's daughter Dina, and their five-year-old son Azriel.

Of course, the worst was yet to come.

Bella went into hiding with her remaining daughter, son-in-law, and grandson. Like so many others, they were eventually discovered. The Nazis gave Bella the choice to stay in Antwerp. She chose the gruesome transport with her family.

On April 19, 1942, Bella and what was left of her family in Belgium were packed onto a train along with 1,396 others. After three days in the cattle car, they arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The meticulous Nazi records are clear on the dates. But there is much we can only wonder about.

Did they see the sign “Arbeit Macht Frei” (so callously stolen recently, and fortunately recovered)? Did they know what was next? Did they recognize that smell in the air? When the train stopped they were unloaded into a line where fates were decided.

The records state that Bella Rabinovitch, along with Sara, Isaac and four-year-old Jacob were “Gazes a L’Arivee” -- gassed on arrival. Over 1,000 of the 1,400 passengers on that train were gassed on arrival.

Bella is not famous, but you knew her story already, a story with millions of different beginnings but one tragic ending.

Bella Rabinovitch was my great-grandmother. I am the descendant of a victim whose ashes reside on these grounds.

My father, Azriel Genachowski, was the five-year-old boy I told you about. His path to freedom with his parents was harrowing, and at several key moments over many months non-Jews risked their lives to save his.

Azriel Genachowski and my mother Adele are here today, with the American delegation. They survived the Nazi onslaught of Europe. They taught me what I have told you. They taught me what Simon Weisenthal once said, “Survival is a privilege which entails obligations.”

Out of the ashes of the Nazi terror come many obligations.

As President Obama said last year upon visiting Buchenwald, a death camp his great uncle helped liberate as an army infantryman, “It is up to us to bear witness; to ensure that the world continues to note what happened here; to remember all those who survived and all those who perished, and to remember them not just as victims, but also as individuals who hoped and loved and dreamed just like us.”

We must remember them not only with our words and prayers, but with our deeds --working to ensure that the sacred phrase “Never Again,” never becomes mechanical language, never drains of meaning.

Elie Weisel teaches, “If we forget, we are guilty, we are accomplices.”

We must remember the courageous prisoners, soldiers, resistance fighters, and ordinary civilians -- Soviets, Poles, Germans, Danes, Americans, and so many others -- who risked their lives and sacrificed so much to save others, reminding us of the boundless human capacity for good.

Our burden is even greater as those who liberated the camps are now in their eighties, and only a handful of concentration camp survivors remain.

As death is taking those whom genocide spared, we must respond to what Czeslaw Milosz called “the command to participate actively in history.” We must renew our commitment to fight for freedom and against intolerance.

Anti-semitism, hatred, and racism remain deep and troubling facts of modern life, the world over. The memory of the atrocities committed at Auschwitz and throughout Europe must steel our resolve to fight every form of intolerance and inhumanity.

The Holocaust proves many sad truths. One is that modernity is not an inoculation against genocide.

The pillars of modernity -- science and technology -- are powerful forces. Perverted for evil by the Nazis, but also sources of unlimited hope, opportunity and transformative change.

My father, who eventually came to the United States to study engineering, taught me about the power of technology to transform lives for the better.

Let us fight so that technology is deployed to spread knowledge, to educate, to ensure that people in all corners of the world know of death-camp victims, survivors, and liberators.

Let us fight so that technology is used to shine a light on oppression and intolerance, to illuminate persecution and dehumanization, to take oppression and mass murder out of the shadows.

We know that the Nazis sought to shut off from the rest of the world the unspeakable killing that went on here. We know that for the Nazis control of the flow of information was an imperative, an SS boot on the free flow of news.

Let us fight for freedom. For fundamental freedoms disregarded too often and tragically in the 20th century, fundamental freedoms that, as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has urged, we must enshrine as core principles in the 21st century -- freedom of expression, freedom of worship, freedom from want, freedom from fear, and freedom to connect.

The freedom of information is essential, while also no substitute for the power of actual places to teach and instruct. It is a moral imperative to preserve Auschwitz and other physical sites of remembrance, because they shock us into an understanding that ideas alone cannot.

As the survivors continue to leave us, places like this take on an even greater importance. Because places like Auschwitz aren't really mute. In their unspeaking way, they tell us of the unspeakable.

The former prisoners who first proposed a memorial and museum at Auschwitz-Birkenau knew this. This place, and others like it, stands as a refutation of those who insist the Holocaust never happened -- a denial of the truth that is baseless, ignorant, and driven by hatred.

The great American writer Mark Twain said: "A lie travels halfway around the world before the truth puts its shoes on." Today's haters are using old and new tools to foster Holocaust denial and mass murder. Let us come together to counter those efforts. Let us work together to make sure the facts of the Holocaust and its lessons remain fresh for each new generation.

My daughter, Lilah, is five years old -- the same age as my father when he and his parents made their escape from Nazi-occupied Belgium.

My son, Aaron, is three years old -- the same age as his mom's father in Nazi-occupied Holland when his parents handed him over to be hidden by righteous non-Jewish heroes who risked their lives to save people they didn't know.

We preserve Auschwitz-Birkenau so that children all over the world like Lilah, Aaron, and their older brother Jake can visit and absorb the full dimensions of the unthinkable tragedy that occurred here.

Bella Rabinovitch is gone, but her spirit lives on in eight grandchildren, 21 great-grandchildren, and 45 great-great-grandchildren, each a living legacy to the victory over Nazi oppression. In Israel and throughout the world, Jews and other groups singled out by the Nazis for extermination survive and thrive.

Bella's spirit also lives on in those who liberated Auschwitz-Birkenau three years after her death; and in those here participating 65 years later in this multi-national, multi-generational recognition that the horrors she and so many others witnessed and suffered must never be permitted to recur.

We are humbled by the survivors. We honor the liberators. We mourn the victims.

In their name, we say: *Yitgadal V'yitkadash Shme Raba.*

In their name, we pledge to remember.

In their name, we pledge: Never Again.